

Concurrence with Rabbi David J. Fine

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This paper was submitted, in December 2022, as a concurrence on “Kohenet Kirvi: Call a Bat Kohen a Kohenet,” by Rabbi David J. Fine. Dissenting and concurring papers are not official positions of the CJLS.

Rabbi David Fine has made an incontrovertible case for the use of the term Kohenet to refer to the daughter of a Kohen. He feels, correctly, that the term conveys the honor of that status more clearly than the term Bat Kohen, and should be preferred in calling the daughter of a kohen to the Torah. I am convinced.

But Rabbi Fine also prefers that calling by name to the Torah remain as it has been traditionally, with the honorific Kohen or Kohenet not used for the individual called to the Torah but only associated with the father of the person called to the Torah. Given that preference, he expresses concern that where matronymics are also used, as in many Conservative congregations, the mother should not use the honorific Kohenet, though appropriate for her, lest that cause confusion and the misattribution of kehunah to her daughter if her father is not a Kohen. Thus in the psak of his paper, numbers 4-6 refer specifically to how to avoid this potential confusion.

I too shared in this concern about the misattribution of kehunah. In a teshuvah I wrote in 1988, "On the Conversion of Adopted and Patrilineal Children," I suggested that the adoptive child of a Kohen could use his father's name, but should not use the designation haKohen with his father's name lest it cause confusion (pp. 170 and 174).¹ But in light of Rabbi Fine's convincing presentation about the honorific value of the designation, I wondered about the propriety of asking the son to the honorific from his father, and similarly why the mother of the olah cannot retain the honorific owed her. If each individual were to be granted their own appropriate honorific, all issues of misattribution would be moot.

Thus the daughter of a Kohenet married to a Yisrael would be called as plonit bat ploni uflonit haKohenet, and we would understand that the daughter is a Yisraelit while her mother gets due recognition of her status. But the daughter of a Kohen married to a Yisraelit (or a Levayah) could be called as plonit haKohenet bat plonit (or plonit haLevayah) ufloni haKohen, and the status of each one would be clear. This would solve as well my dilemma of the adoptive child. The adoptive child of a Kohen married to a Levayah (who was the natural son of a Yisrael or did not know who was his natural father) could be called to the Torah as ploni ben ploni haKohen uflonit haLevayah. Again, everyone would bear his own designation.

¹ These are the 14th and 18th pages of the responsum, but the responsum as found on the RA website was uploaded from Proceedings of the CJLS of the Conservative Movement: 1986-1990 where it is pp. 170 and 174. It is also reprinted in Responsa 1980-1990: The CJLS of the Conservative Movement, where it is on pp. 404 and 408.

This, it appears to me, would be simpler and obviate the need for numbers 4-6 of the psakim found in Rabbi Fine's paper. In psak 9 Rabbi Fine himself found this "not objectionable."

So let us use the term *Kohenet* proudly, as Rabbi Fine proposes. And I would do so more broadly even than he. To each her own.²

² In a teshuvah just passed, entitled *Egalitarian Divorce and Gittin*, Rabbi Pamela Barmash worries about the addition of matronymics in *Gittin* as they expand the length of the names of the parties, and those names are required to appear on a single line, and the whole get in 12 lines. This suggestion would make the name even longer. I would grant, then, that in *Gittin* only the traditional names of the parties and their patronymics be used.